

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA
FROM THEN, 1854 TO NOW, 1959

By R. T. M. PESCOTT

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MELBOURNE! 1854! Such was the setting for the foundation of something new in the scientific life of the recently formed but rapidly developing colony. The seeds that were sown then were to grow from year to year until finally a society was to develop which was to reflect throughout the world the scientific life and thought of the State of Victoria.

In order to fully appreciate the significance of events that took place at that time, it is desirable to have some appreciation of the conditions that existed in Melbourne in and immediately prior to 1854.

It was only 19 years since John Batman, a founder of Melbourne, had sailed from Tasmania to Port Phillip Bay, and in June 1835 located the Yarra R., making his famous diary entry—'This will be the place for a village'. It was only 17 years since the first Crown Land sale was held in Melbourne, and only 16 years since the first newspaper, the *Melbourne Advertiser*, had been published by John Pascoe Fawkner.

The most important single factor in the development of the Colony of Victoria up to 1854 was undoubtedly the discovery of gold in 1851. The inevitable first effect of this discovery was an exodus of the male population of both Melbourne and Geelong to the 'Diggings'. At the beginning of 1851, Melbourne had a population of approximately 20,000 people. Immediately this number became drastically reduced, and new suburban areas nearby, such as Richmond, almost became abandoned, while the city itself became more and more deserted day by day. Incentives were offered by employers to keep employees in the city—government officials, e.g., being hastily granted a 50% increase of salary to induce them to remain at their posts. This exodus was only a passing phase; in a week or so the gold seekers were drifting back, some successful, some disappointed.

Before long, the mighty flood of immigration from other parts of the world set in to seriously embarrass the whole life of Melbourne. During 1852, 1853 and 1854 the numbers of persons arriving in Victoria by sea averaged 90,000 a year, or nearly 250 a day, so that by 1854 the population of Melbourne and suburbs was close on 80,000. This immediately created an accommodation problem. It was obvious that the buildings already constructed in the town proper, less than 10,000 in number, could not house this tremendous influx. The solution lay in the rapid growth of 'Canvas Town', as it became known, an extensive area of tents of all descriptions on the S. side of the river, on what is now known as the King's Domain. The city itself on the other side of the river contrasted sharply with this mass of canvas but was equally unreal. No two houses adjoining were of the same height or of the same material, while large numbers of iron buildings had been imported over the years for use as stores. This had caused the City Council to tighten its building regulations.

By 1854, when the Town Hall was completed, neither water from the Yan Yean supply, nor gas from the newly formed Gas Company, had been reticulated through the city area, and the streets, though formed, were still of gravel, and not particularly well drained. The business houses of Melbourne were largely concentrated in the heart of the city proper, with little or no expansion to the nearer suburbs.

The scientific life of Melbourne was centred largely on government departments, with meetings being held at the offices or at the homes of individual scientists. The recently formed University of Melbourne, situated in 'the bush at Carlton', was in the process of organization, with the foundation stone laid, and the first 4 professors appointed but not yet arrived. With regard to the natural sciences, the need for university supervision was considered of the utmost importance, 'as questions of the most ordinary character are being daily referred to England'. It was to Professor Frederick McCoy that the University was looking for this guidance—McCoy, a scientist with an overseas reputation who was also to make a name in Australia, and cause considerable embarrassment at times, particularly in the affairs of the National Museum, to the Philosophical Institute and later to the Royal Society of Victoria.

The National Museum of Natural History had commenced in a small way in the Crown Lands Offices under the guidance of the Surveyor-General, while the Public Library was at a very similar stage to the University—the foundation stone being laid, but the building not completed.

It was into this type of environment that, in 1854, two separate scientific bodies, with very similar aims and ideals, came into being within a month or so of one another. These were the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science and the Philosophical Society of Victoria. It was their amalgamation in the following year, to form the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, that paved the way for the granting, in 1859, of the title 'Royal Society of Victoria' to this latter organization.

It may seem strange to us in 1959, viewing the position that existed in 1854, that two such societies should spring into being at about the same time. But after all, was it strange? The late Sir Russell Grimwade, in 1954, wrote a short statement that admirably sums up the position.

The making of the bridge-head of British people on the coast of Australia towards the end of the eighteenth century is now a well-known matter of history. The difficulties of the first settlement in an empty and comparatively harsh land were tremendous and of such magnitude that it was doubtful at times whether the planned occupation could be carried on. Carefree Australians today are apt to forget that at the time of first entry their land produced no orthodox food and its soils had never been cultivated and that the abundance of foods produced within its boundaries today all have their origin overseas. The germ of all edible plants and animals was imported from foreign lands, mostly those of the northern hemisphere. The provision of food, storage of water, and the development of means of communication constituted the first duties of the pioneers. When these very first needs were fulfilled, even in a rudimentary manner, the obligation to posterity became revealed. We are fortunate that from our very beginnings there have been far-seeing and intellectual giants amongst us who, almost fanatically, have sought to gain a full knowledge of their surroundings.

It was those 'far-seeing and intellectual giants' who had the initiative and the ability to found the two somewhat kindred scientific societies in the same year.

Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science

Early in 1854, William Sidney Gibbons, an analytical chemist of 5 Collins St. E., Melbourne, and a lecturer at the Mechanics Institution, conceived the idea

of the foundation of a scientific society in the newly formed but rapidly developing colony where men of science, of all branches, could meet and discuss mutual problems.

After much personal thought and, at times, animated discussion with fellow-citizens of similar interests, the project so developed and became of such importance to him, that he proceeded with the organization of a public meeting to place his proposals before those interested.

This meeting was convened at the Mechanics Institution for Thursday, 15 June 1854, at 4 p.m., when His Worship the Mayor of Melbourne took the Chair. Here, Gibbons spoke at length on the aims and objects of his proposed new society, and so convinced those present that it was unanimously decided to form 'The Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science'. The main purposes were stated at that meeting to be—

- (a) a means of communication between persons engaged in the pursuit of science;
- (b) the cultivating of a refined taste among the people of Victoria;
- (c) provide a source to which the community generally may look for information on scientific subjects;
- (d) provide a centre for the collection of observations and specimens from all sources;
- (e) provide an agency for the development of the resources of the colony.

It was also proposed that membership consist of ordinary members and corresponding members, and should be open to anyone whose interests were similar to those of the Institute, but that they would be required to be admitted by ballot. The subscription rates, in terms of modern figures, were extraordinarily high, ordinary members being required to pay an annual subscription of £4 with an entrance fee of £2, and corresponding members £2 per annum with an entry fee of £1. It was also proposed that, if necessary, the Institute divide itself into sections for the consideration of special problems.

At this public meeting, a committee of 6 was appointed to hold office until 31 December 1854 and to prepare a constitution which would be submitted to a general meeting on Saturday, 24 June. The 6 chosen for this task were Captain C. Pasley, R.E., Colonial Engineer; J. J. Moody; W. S. Gibbons, Analytical Chemist; Dr John Maund; F. Sinnott; and A. R. C. Selwyn, Government Geologist; all respected citizens and scientists of Melbourne.

This committee presented their report and rules at a general meeting held, not on 24 June, but on 31 July, and without amendment they were unanimously approved. The laws were based on the observation of the working of similar bodies elsewhere, the main principles of the British Association for the Advancement of Science being used as a model. The first office bearers were—

Patron:

HIS EXCELLENCY SIR CHARLES HOTHAM, C.B.

President:

HIS HONOUR THE ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE

Vice-President:

CAPTAIN A. CLARKE, R.E., SURVEYOR-GENERAL

Treasurer:

JOHN MAUND, M.D.

Honorary Secretary:

WILLIAM SIDNEY GIBBONS

Council:

F. SINNETT	E. G. MAYNE
CAPTAIN PASLEY, R.E.	M. B. JACKSON
A. R. C. SELWYN	A. K. SMITH
GEORGE HIGINBOTHAM	GEORGE HOLMES
F. MUELLER	

The inaugural conversazione of the Institute was held in the Mechanics Institution on 22 September 1854 with the President in the Chair. In his inaugural address, the Acting Chief Justice, Mr Justice Barry, summed up the position in his opening sentence—‘We assemble in the vestibule of the Temple of Science, many of us unacquainted one with the other, invited to engage in a course of mutual improvement, and to assist in the cause of general instruction’. Throughout the room were ranged contributions by members, some 33 in all, representative of the objects of the Institute. They varied from cases of gold specimens, to physical and chemical apparatus, to the prize design for Government House, to a model of a steam ferry, to statues. A series of short lectures by such men as Dr Mueller, Dr Maund and Mr W. S. Gibbons concluded the inaugural conversazione.

At the ordinary meeting held the following week, 5 sections of the Institute were formed, viz.—sanitary economy, engineering, political economy, chemistry, and microscopic investigations. The membership by this time had grown to 82.

In all, some 6 papers were delivered and 20 published during the time the Institute was in existence. These papers covered a wide field, with perhaps the greatest emphasis on the commercial development of the country, such subjects as water supply, gas and gas works, bridge construction, sanitation and food manufacture being brought prominently before the members. On the other hand, the deliberations of the Philosophical Society were largely concerned, in the first year, with botany and the natural resources of the country.

It was in November 1854 that the Institute saw the wisdom of amalgamation with the Philosophical Society, which had been founded in the meantime, as ‘the existence of two separate societies caused a division of the forces which might be brought to bear upon the same subjects, and the colony was hardly able to support adequately the two separate institutions having the same objects’. By January 1855, they were ready with a definite proposal. This proposal was apparently received rather coldly at first by members of the Philosophical Society who apparently felt they had little to gain by such an amalgamation. However, after considerable negotiation between the two bodies, amalgamation finally took place with a new body, the Philosophical Institute of Victoria being formed, the last meeting of the old Institute taking place on 7 June 1855.

The amalgamation was obviously not unanimous as far as the members of both societies were concerned, although it was the obvious course to follow. For many years after amalgamation, bitter controversies raged between individuals. Perhaps the most unco-operative was the original founder of the Victorian Institute, Sidney Gibbons. The following extract from his papers found after his death clearly illustrates this—

A little after I formed my Institute, some official formed a club at the Lands Office. Seeing my success, this club opened its doors and became a competitor with the public under the name of the Philosophical Society. After a year or more of their competition the Victorian Institute proposed and ultimately effected an amalgamation only to find the Philosophical Society was moribund and in debt.

Philosophical Society of Victoria

Within a month of the calling of the public meeting to form the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science, a somewhat similar organization, the Philosophical Society of Victoria had its inception.

It is clear that, although the first general meeting of the Philosophical Society took place on 12 August 1854, presumably in what was then the Museum of Natural History, considerable work had been put into the preliminaries of founding such a society, as at that meeting, an inaugural address was presented by the first President, Captain Andrew Clarke, R.E., Surveyor-General of the Colony.

The actual initiation of the foundation of the Philosophical Society was undoubtedly to the credit of Captain Clarke. In response to a proposition submitted to the Legislative Council on 23 September 1853, that the Government should set aside a sum of money to establish a museum of natural history, the Colonial Secretary, in reply, promised the necessary assistance 'if the honourable member and others who were interested in the subject, would form themselves into a committee, or initiate some society or institution which would co-operate with the Government in carrying out the objects in view'. Acting on this, Captain Clarke called the first meeting of interested persons on 17 June 1854, at his offices, where the nucleus of a museum was already extant. At that meeting, 8 men were present, and they voted Dr R. Eades, a prominent Melbourne physician, to the Chair.

Eight similar meetings took place after that date. The original intention was to found a society known as 'The Victorian Philosophical and Literary Society', but at the first meeting, largely through the agency of Dr Ferdinand Mueller, Government Botanist, the title 'The Philosophical Society of Victoria' was adopted.

At this meeting, a sub-committee, consisting of Dr R. Eades, Dr D. E. Wilkie, Dr F. Mueller, Mr S. Hanaford, Mr F. C. Christy, and Mr S. Wekey, was appointed to draw up a prospectus of the proposed society, together with rules and regulations for its conduct. This was duly carried out and approved by the provisional council, and the office bearers *pro tem.* were elected at a preliminary meeting held in the Mechanics Institution on 15 July 1854. It was most appropriate that the Surveyor-General should be elected President, and at the same time the Society was assured of the use of the Museum of Natural History at the Crown Lands building for its regular meetings.

Before discussing the composition of the initial executive committee, some details of the prospectus of this Philosophical Society, under date of 1854, are very important, as they had a very great bearing on the later developments of the Society, finally resulting in the formation of the Royal Society of Victoria as we know it today.

It is well to realize that the original full name of the Society was 'The Philosophical Society of Victoria (to be incorporated by Royal Charter)'. The prospectus stated that 'After the grant of the Charter, this Society shall assume the title of The Royal Society of Victoria', and it is clearly evident that those who were instrumental in its formation were basing their organization on that of the Royal Society of London, a society with which many of the organizers were clearly familiar.

The object of this new society, as defined in the original prospectus, was stated very simply as 'embracing the whole field of science, with a special reference to the cultivation of those departments that are calculated to develop the natural resources of the country'. This simple statement of objective, so different from that of its fellow Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science, gave an early

indication of the way in which it was proposed the new society would develop, i.e. the formation of separate departments or committees within the Society, to specialize in some particular field of work.

The objects of the Society were to be carried out by original researches conducted by the members, and by original papers to be read at the periodical meetings and published under the direction of the Society. This latter objective laid down a principle which over the years, through exchanges of publications with other societies, has produced the now world-famous library of the Royal Society of Victoria, rich in overseas periodicals and in literature relating to science generally.

Membership of this new society was to consist of 3 categories—Fellows, Ordinary and Honorary Members, and here again the likeness to the Royal Society of London was apparent. It was proposed that Fellows should be elected from ordinary members by ballot, with a 4/5 majority necessary for election, whereas ordinary members would be admitted on application to the council. Honorary membership was to be considered one of the highest marks of distinction that the Society would confer.

The office bearers who were to be elected annually were to be a president, one or more vice-presidents, treasurer, secretary, and these, with 8 other members elected from among the Fellows of the Society, formed the council. The office bearers and council of the Philosophical Society of Victoria who were placed in office *pro tem.* until the first anniversary meeting in 1855, were published as follows:

Patron:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

President:

A. CLARKE, M.L.C., F.R.S.L.V.D., SURVEYOR-GENERAL

Vice-President:

GODFREY HOWITT, M.D., F.R.B.S.E.

Council:

REV. A. MORISON, V.D.M.

A. SELWYN

F. MUELLER, F.R.Bav.S.

J. HUTCHINSON, M.D.

R. EADES, M.B., F.R.C.S.I.

S. IFFLA, M.D.

F. C. CHRISTY, Assoc. I.C.E.

W. BLANDOWSKI

Treasurer:

D. E. WILKIE, M.D.

Honorary Secretary:

S. WEKEY

Prior to the first public meeting of the Society, the interim council appointed its first two Honorary Members—Captain J. H. Kay, F.R.S., Private Secretary to the Lt-Governor; and William Howitt, the explorer.

The enthusiasm of the members of this Society was apparent when it was unanimously decided that the monthly meetings should be held on the 2nd Saturday of each month commencing at 7 p.m.

For the first year, every member was expected to pay £3.3.0 in fees without any entrance fee, but after the first 12 months an entrance fee of an additional £2.2.0 would be required of all new members.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the early activities of the Society was the very close link that existed between it and the then new-formed National

Museum of Natural History. Apart from meeting monthly in the museum, the early constitution provided that 'the effects of the Society in books, specimens, models, of what kind soever shall be considered the property of the National Museum until otherwise ordered and resolved by the annual general meeting of the Society'. It is not an exaggeration to state that the early development of the National Museum resulted almost exclusively from the activities of the Philosophical Society.

It is not surprising that with men on the council like Captain Clarke, Surveyor-General; Dr Ferdinand von Mueller, Government Botanist; Mr W. Blandowski, Curator of the Natural History Museum; Mr A. Selwyn and Mr Brough Smyth, Geologists; men who had all participated in exploring work in the new colony, and with the gold rush vividly in their minds, one of the first activities the Society proposed was 'the organization of exploring expeditions for the purpose of prospecting in different parts of the colony, with a view to the development of its natural resources'. This project, presented to the monthly meeting of the Society held on 10 September 1854, was referred to a special sub-committee for detailed report.

Their report, when presented to the following meeting, formulated a policy of exploration which placed the Society, and later the Royal Society of Victoria, in the pioneering field of this important stage of development of a new country. It is well to record, in some detail, the resolutions of this sub-committee which were unanimously adopted by the general meeting of the Society held on 18 September 1854, as they formed the basis for the organization of later exploration parties, including the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition. The resolutions were as follows:

1. That the Society shall organize exploring expeditions, which shall be despatched from time to time, for the purpose of discovering new auriferous fields, coal, etc., and to collect additional information respecting the various mineral and vegetable resources of Victoria.
2. That each exploring party shall be furnished with special instructions by the Society.
3. That the reports of such expeditions shall form part of the *Transactions* of the Society, and be published for general information.
4. That in addition to the individual exertions of the members, the whole proceeds of the first *Transactions* of the Society shall be appropriated to this purpose, and the half of each subsequent publication.
5. That any further funds which may be required to carry out this object shall be raised by public subscription.
6. That the President be requested to communicate with His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, as patron of the Society, requesting him to give his assent to the enterprise.

To assist with the proposed exploration parties, a public appeal was opened by the Society in September 1854, with contributions to be forwarded to either the Museum of Natural History or the offices of the Victorian Vineyard and Fruit Garden Company. It is not clear what connection this latter organization had with either the Philosophical Society or the proposed exploration party. The immediate response to this was not encouraging.

The November 1854 monthly meeting must always stand out in the history of the Society for two decisions that were made. The council was instructed to carry out—(a) the preparation of petitions to His Excellency the Lt-Governor and to the Honourable the Legislative Council to assist in the carrying out of exploration, and (b) the preparation of the form of application for the incorporation of the Society by a Royal Charter.

The first of these decisions was apparently implemented at once as, in December 1854, a copy of the prepared memorial was despatched from the Museum of

Natural History by the secretary of the Society to the Private Secretary of the Lt-Governor. The reaction to this memorial, however, was unfavourable as not only did the Lt-Governor refuse to receive the deputation from the Society but 'he regrets that the insufficiency of the public funds to meet the public requirements renders it imperative upon him to stay every possible expenses, but that with regard to gold, the numerous prospecting parties (which are searching the length and breadth of the land), in the Lieutenant-Governor's opinion, fully encompass the end sought by the Society; whilst with regard to coal, it is reported that the fields at Western Port are sufficient to last a generation'.

With this abrupt refusal on the part of the Lt-Governor to assist in this section of the Society's plans, the matter of exploration was dropped for the time being.

The second of the discussions was not implemented at once, in fact, it was to be approximately 5 years before the desire of the council was realized, and then not in the form of a Royal Charter.

At this stage in the development of the Society, a proposal was received from the Victorian Institute that the amalgamation of the two organizations would be a desirable one. This was in January 1855, and at once the Society commenced negotiations for its accomplishment. However, this proposal was temporarily relegated to the background, following a very contentious paper delivered to the Society by Dr David E. Wilkie who spoke on the subject 'On the probable failure of the Yan Yean Reservoir', a subject which was, of course, of vital importance to the development of the rapidly expanding Melbourne. His objections were based on what he considered the inadequacy of the supply and its unsuitability from a sanitary point of view. As can well be imagined, this paper brought forth a clamour for a detailed investigation of the whole scheme, and a special commission was appointed by the Society consisting of 3 engineers and the secretary to investigate the matter further. This investigation was carried out over the following 2 months, and a report submitted to the Society; later, it was published in detail in the *Transactions* of the Society for 1855 as Article XV. This report in many ways vindicated the opinions submitted by Dr Wilkie in his earlier paper and made recommendations for what it considered to be improvements in the design of the whole water-catchment proposal.

Following this discussion on the Yan Yean Water Scheme, the matter of amalgamation of the two societies was again brought into prominence. The members of the Philosophical Society also felt very strongly on the matter, and pointed out that—

whereas the Victorian Institute had only a credit balance of £68 in March 1855, the Philosophical Society had available funds to amount of £170 which, in the case of amalgamation, would, leave, in favour of the Victorian Institute, £102. Moreover at the same date, only six papers had been read at the Institute compared with seventeen at the Philosophical Society, which also in the case of an amalgamation, would leave in their favour eleven papers.

However, it was pointed out that as far as the officers of the Institute were concerned an amalgamation *de facto* had already taken place, since the president of the Institute with several members of the council had actually become members of the Philosophical Society. At this time, the Philosophical Society had 132 members.

Following the appointment of a committee of 6 from the Society, who later met a similar committee of 6 from the Victorian Institute, and held 4 meetings discussing the amalgamation of the two societies, a detailed statement was pre-

sented to the members of both organizations, recommending amalgamation under certain terms:

1. That the two societies be amalgamated, under the title, pending the grant of a Royal Charter, of 'The Philosophical Institute of Victoria'.
2. That the first office bearers of the proposed Institute be—

President:	Captain A. Clarke, R.E.
Vice Presidents:	His Honour Mr. Justice Barry Godfrey Howitt
Council:	The existing members of the Council of the Philosophical Society and the Victorian Institute.
Treasurer:	D. E. Wilkie.
Hon. Secretaries:	S. Wekey R. B. Smyth W. S. Gibbons
3. That the objects of the Philosophical Institute shall be the same as that of the Philosophical Society, and that the mode of operation of the new Institute shall be the same as that of the old Society.

Thus was effected an amalgamation of two kindred societies who in their own particular sphere of activity had contributed largely to a detailed knowledge of the natural resources of the colony. It also effected a co-ordination of the activities of the scientific life of the community, producing an active and virile society which in the years ahead became the Royal Society of Victoria, a society that played an honoured part in the scientific development of the State of Victoria.

Philosophical Institute of Victoria

The first meeting of the new-formed Philosophical Institute was held at the Museum of Natural History on 10 July 1855, with a representative of the Victorian Institute, Dr J. Maund, in the Chair. At this meeting the following papers were read:

On the physical character of the County of Heytesbury. By Robert Seott.

On the favourable geological and chemical nature of the principal rocks and soils of Victoria, in reference to the production of ordinary cereals and wine. By Clement Hodgkinson.

In addition, a meteorological table of the climatology of June was presented, and a large number of natural history specimens, some new to science, were exhibited.

It was obvious that the amalgamation of the two societies had not been received too well in certain quarters, as shown by an incident that occurred at this first meeting. The date and time of meeting for the new Institute being under discussion it was pointed out that the plan pursued by the late Victorian Institute was to hold meetings on the first Thursday in each month, which generally occurred when the moon was full. This immediately brought a retort from the secretary of the late society that such trivial subjects were never brought before a general meeting of the Philosophical Society, and he hoped would not be discussed at a meeting of the new-formed Philosophical Institute.

The Colony of Victoria at this time was faced with serious financial difficulties, with a result that scientific work came under very careful scrutiny, with expenditure being drastically curtailed. This had its effect on the work of the Institute also, with the botanical work of Dr Mueller suffering most. Economies were so severe that Mueller was forced, because no money was available, to give up his official post of paid Government Botanist, but was allowed to retain the title of the position without pay. He took advantage of this to join the Gregory exploring expedition

to the NW. of Australia, an experience which was to prove most valuable to the Institute later when the Burke and Wills expedition was being organized. As there was a distinct possibility of Mueller's services being lost to science in Victoria, and particularly to the new-formed Institute, he was elected in July 1855 the first honorary member of the Philosophical Institute, an honour he greatly prized.

The relationship between the Philosophical Institute and the Natural History Museum was very much in the fore at this particular time. It should be remembered that the Philosophical Society was instituted with relation to the Museum of Natural History, and that the monthly meetings of the Society were held at the museum. Moreover, an important feature of the constitution of the Society was that the advancement and extension of the museum should be one of its main objects. Thus it was logical that the new-formed Philosophical Institute should also concern itself with the future well-being of the museum, and make representations thereon to the government. The rumour that it was contemplated that the museum would be moved, at least temporarily, to the University of Melbourne caused great concern to the Society.

The reason for this contemplated move arose from the inability of Captain Clarke to house the collections any longer in his room at the Assay Offices. Apparently with the advice of Professor McCoy, an offer was made by the Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, to the council of the University to take charge of the specimens collected, and house them until other arrangements could be made.

In October 1855, the council of the Institute presented to the Governor a memorial asking that the National Museum be not removed to the University. Sir Charles listened courteously to this request, but at the same time was not able to give the council a definite answer, obviously because of his previous commitment to the University.

Not hearing anything further on the matter from the administration following the death of Sir Charles Hotham, and having learned that it was the immediate intention of the government to go ahead with the proposed transfer, the council of the Philosophical Institute, by a decision made on 20 May 1856, decided to make further representations against the proposals. Accordingly, a committee of 5 members of the council were appointed as a 'Museum Committee' to memorialize the government on the matter. On 17 June 1856, they presented their memorial to His Excellency Major-General Edward Macarthur 'directing your Excellency's attention to the serious disadvantages that would result to the public and to the cause of science from such an arrangement'. The same committee, on 1 July 1856, made direct representations to the trustees of the Public Library asking that, if any move were necessary, it should be to a portion of the Public Library building.

Professor McCoy, always the opportunist and seeing that this was the strategic time to strike, delivered an address to the Philosophical Institute on 15 July 1856 on the subject 'Museums in Victoria'. In this he paved the way for the next step he was to take, by stating that it was recognized in other countries that a museum and a university were inseparable, and that in Melbourne facilities existed at the University for the housing of the specimens already collected.

This address so nettled the council of the Institute that a further petition was drawn up and directed to the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Melbourne calling for a public meeting of protest. This meeting, held on 26 July 1856 at the Mechanics Institution, decided to again interview the 'officer administering the government' to lodge a further protest against the proposal.

Again, McCoy was a step ahead of his antagonists, as, on the night that the special committee was organizing a further public meeting, he hastily removed the whole of the collections of the museum from the Assay Building and delivered them to the University.

Obviously this latter bombshell from McCoy so disheartened the council that no further reference to the transfer was made, except that from time to time they took steps to ensure that the museum did not become completely absorbed into the University.

The suggestion at the April 1856 monthly meeting that a commission be appointed to consider the utility and practicability of introducing the camel and other useful animals into Victoria was to have an important bearing at a later stage on another project the Royal Society sponsored—the Burke and Wills expedition.

A special general meeting on 19 June of the same year, called to discuss a number of contentious subjects, brought heated argument on the subject of life membership. The principle of life membership was never in question, but the amount that should be paid was the subject of repeated motions and amendments. Finally a figure of £20 was decided upon, whereon a number became life members at once. However, the matter was not finalized at that point, as, at the next meeting, the following motion by the treasurer was approved—‘That in order to liquidate the existing debt of the Institute the fee for Life Membership be reduced to £10, until the sum of one hundred and twenty pounds shall have been raised’. What happened to those who had paid their life membership fees the previous month is not recorded.

Another project with which the Philosophical Institute became interested at this stage of its life owed its beginning to a paper delivered by Professor Wilson at the November 1856 monthly meeting ‘On the steps taken in England to provide a telescope for observing the nebulae of the Southern Hemisphere’. Considerable discussion followed this paper as to the necessity for astronomical work in Victoria with the result that a committee of 5 was empowered ‘to take such steps as may seem expedient, to induce the government to place upon the estimates a sufficient sum to establish an Astronomical Observatory in Victoria’. The steps taken by this committee were apparently effective as the government immediately expressed itself most favourably respecting the establishment of such an observatory, and asked for detailed estimates of cost. This was provided to the extent of an initial sum of £7,000 for equipment and buildings, with an annual sum of £1,300 for staffing. The original suggestion called for a site of land on the W. portion of Royal Park, clear of trees, on the brow of the hill overlooking Flemington.

The latter part of 1857 saw the commencement of what was to be one of the greatest undertakings of the Society and one of the epic stories of Australian exploration. This was a proposal put forward at the October meeting that consideration be given to ‘The practicability of fitting out in Victoria a Geographical Expedition, for the purpose of carrying out the great idea of the lamented Leichhardt, of exploring the vast interior of Australia from east to west, and for the purpose, if possible, of gathering some tidings of the fate of Leichhardt and his party’. It was estimated that a sum of £6,000 would be necessary to organize and maintain a suitable exploring party for a period of two years. A large committee of 32 members, including a number of members of both the Legislative Assembly and Council, was appointed to draw up proposals to accomplish this project.

This committee, after four meetings and after taking evidence from explorers in other States, presented their detailed report at a special meeting late in December,

with a recommendation that, as soon as financial support was available, the project get under way.

It had been obvious for some time that, to meet the growing needs of the Institute, now with over 230 members, a special building for the Institute was necessary. The facilities provided at the Museum of Natural History, while satisfactory and most desirable in the early life of the Institute, had become hopelessly inadequate for the fast-growing and energetic organization. Consequently, on 27 October 1857, an approach was made to the President of the Board of Land and Works for a grant of land on which to erect a building for the Institute to hold its meetings and to preserve its property. With this request was submitted a list of 4 allotments in order of priority as being suitable for the purpose. After an interval of nearly 3 months, the Institute was informed that the Governor in Council had been pleased to approve of a reserve of 1 rood 6 perches being made available for the purpose at the junction of Victoria St. with LaTrobe St. It is interesting to note that this site had the lowest priority of the 4 sites suggested by the Institute. However, after consultation with the architects it was found that this area was too small on which to erect an adequate building, and further representations were made to the government for this area to be increased. Eventually, in August 1858, the whole triangular piece of land consisting of 2 roods 6 perches lying between Victoria St., LaTrobe St. and Rathdown St. was reserved for the Institute. The land was immediately fenced, and a competition held for the most suitable plan embracing a large hall capable of seating 300 persons, museum, library, laboratory, and caretaker's quarters.

A number of detailed plans and drawings was received from architects and builders throughout Melbourne and some of the nearer suburbs, and one, an architect's plan, was finally chosen after months of discussion. Estimates called for the construction of such buildings resulted in prices ranging between £4,300 and £5,800 for the bare minimum of a building, with at least an additional £1,500 for plastering and finishing the inside and outside of the building and finishing the joinery work.

These tenders having proved most unsatisfactory, the council rapidly lost faith in the architect in question, and sought a new architect with new ideas. The choice, by ballot, happily fell on Joseph Reed, a partner in the firm of Reed and Barnes, Architects and Surveyors, of 9 Elizabeth St., Melbourne. The word 'happily' rather underestimates the position as Reed became famous in Melbourne as the designer of such buildings as the Town Hall, Wilson Hall at the University, the Public Library, the Exhibition, the Scots and Independent churches in Collins St., and many banks and business houses.

Reed was given the task of providing 'a building restricted to a meeting room with temporary accommodation for a keeper, and that the meeting room should contain 1,800 square feet on the floor and its contents to amount to 40,000 cubical feet'. Again tenders were called and, on this occasion, that of Matthew Taylor for £2,750 was accepted, with the provision that, if external plastering or cementing was required, an additional £350 would be necessary. However, it was decided to do without this latter 'luxury'. Work commenced on this project almost as soon as tenders were accepted in May 1859.

The annual report of the Institute for 1857 drew attention to the fact that no definite steps had been taken as yet towards obtaining a Royal Charter, and recommended that an immediate application be made to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen to accomplish this.

The period 1857/58 saw one of those happenings that fortunately occur very infrequently in the life of such a society. The occasion in question arose on the presentation of a paper by a council member, William Blandowski, Curator of the National Museum, describing several new species of freshwater fishes collected by him on an expedition he had made into N. Victoria. Whether this council member had any bad feelings towards other council members before the presentation of this paper, we shall never know; but one thing is clear, he had many enemies after—and perhaps with good cause. In naming these fishes, he proposed to 'honour' certain members of the council by using their names for the specific names of the new species. This is a common and accepted practice in taxonomy and, provided good taste is observed in its use, is not objectionable. However, for 2 of these species, named after 2 very prominent members of council, the following descriptions were used:

Sample N. Slimy, slippery fish. Lives in the mud. Is of a violent bluish colour on the belly. The whole upper surface is of a dirty olivish-green colour, with numerous irregular dark patches.

Sample B. A fish easily recognized by its low forehead, big belly and sharp spine.

When it is realized that one of the two members of council concerned was the leader of an important religious organization in Melbourne, and the other a highly respected physician in the city, it is understandable that a near-riot resulted. The author, refusing to withdraw his paper and description, was immediately censured, and his expulsion from the Institute sought. However, the necessary two-thirds majority not being obtained, the 2 Council members concerned immediately resigned from all active participation in the Institute. The paper in some way having been printed prematurely, then presented a problem, and the council ordered all copies of the offending pages to be destroyed. All but one were apparently surrendered and destroyed, the sole survivor being now in the possession of the Public Library of Victoria. In the appropriate number of the *Transactions* will be found the following reference to this incident:

Pages 131, 132, 133 and 134 are expunged from this volume as containing matter injurious to the Institute.

Will the one surviving copy cause any difficulties to the taxonomists of the future? Time alone will tell.

The rapid expansion of the membership of the Institute at this stage was causing considerable concern to the council in that there were insufficient interests within the Institute to obtain the maximum benefits from this increased membership. Consequently, a proposal was put forward that, within the Institute, there should be a series of sections developed, in which members with similar interests could concentrate upon and specialize in their particular branch of science. In all, 7 sections were nominated as follows:

- Section A. Physical, astronomical, and mechanical science, including engineering.
- Section B. Chemistry, mineralogy and metallurgy.
- Section C. Natural history and geology.
- Section D. Medical and microscopical science including physiology and pathology.
- Section E. Geography and ethnology.
- Section F. Social science and statistics.
- Section G. Literature and fine arts, including architecture.

The adoption of this new principle at the annual general meeting held on 8 December 1858 ushered in a new era of scientific endeavour within the Institute,

which was to set the pattern of activities for many years to come, and was largely responsible for much of the detailed scientific work that emanated from the Institute.

In 1859 occurred a number of developments in the working of the Institute. Firstly, the proposals for Australian exploration were advanced a step further; secondly, towards the end of the year approval was granted for the change of title to 'The Royal Society of Victoria'; thirdly, the main hall of the new building was completed. The development of the exploration proposals followed a decision by the council that the project was now sufficiently large that it should not be confined to members of the Institute but should be one in which all participated. Following an earlier public meeting, at which the sum of £1,000 was promised by an anonymous donor towards the expenses of the expedition on the condition that the Institute found a further £2,000 within 12 months, the Institute took up the challenge and, by the end of the stipulated period, had not only exceeded this amount but also had the promise of £500 for transport of goods along the Murray and Darling R. In addition, the government having voted the sum of £6,000 for exploration, the general exploration committee applied for and was successful in having this sum added to the moneys already raised by their own efforts. With the financial arrangements secure, the Institute felt it was in a position to embark on the project and offered the leadership of the party to Mr A. C. Gregory of New South Wales who had only recently returned from a similar journey of exploration to the NW. of Australia.

During August of the same year, the application of the Philosophical Institute to assume the title of 'The Royal Society of Victoria' was forwarded to London for the consideration of Her Majesty the Queen. At a special meeting called for 23 January 1860, the President, Dr Mueller, read a copy of a despatch from His Grace the Duke of Newcastle to His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly as follows:

Downing Street.

8th November, 1859

Sir,

I have received your despatch No. 70 of the 5th of August last, requesting, on behalf of the members of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, of which you are the Patron, that Her Majesty will be pleased to permit that Society to assume the title of 'The Royal Society of Victoria'.

Having laid this application before the Queen, I have much pleasure in informing you that Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to signify her assent to it, and to sanction and approve of the Philosophical Institute in future assuming the title of 'The Royal Society of Victoria'.

I have etc.

(Signed) Newcastle

Governor Sir Henry Barkly, K.C.B.

This approval arrived at a most opportune time as it coincided with the completion of the hall of the new buildings in the master plan for the new site. This hall also afforded temporary accommodation for the museum of the Institute, and supplied necessary accommodation for sectional meetings. The opinion was expressed at the time that it was hoped to complete another section of the master plan at an early date so as to afford facilities to those members desirous of prosecuting experimental studies, and enable the sections of the Institute to carry out their researches successfully. As an expression of the valuable services rendered to the Institute in the completion of this hall by their honorary architect, Mr Joseph Reed, the council presented him with a life membership.

Victoria
No 70 - 1859.

Governor

No 46

Sir H. Barkly K. C. B.

Commande

D.S.
8 Nov 59

MINUTE	FROM
NOV 11 1859	NOV 8 1859
W. Kerriale	
V.C. Porteous	
D. G. Kerriale S.	

Sir

I have received your despatch No 70 of the 5th August last requesting, on behalf of the Members of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, of which you are the Patron, that Her Majesty will be pleased to permit that Society to assume the title of the Royal

Society of Victoria.

~~I have had the~~
^{Honour} laid
~~before the~~

Application before the Queen, ~~and~~ I have much pleasure in informing you that Her Majesty has been

graciously pleased to signify Her assent to ~~accede to their request~~ ^{is, and to sanction} and ^{in future assuming the} ~~title of "the Royal~~ ^{Philosophical Institute's} ~~Society of Victoria"~~ ^{title of "the Royal}

of

Phonography

FIG. 1.—Draft of notification of permission to use title 'Royal Society of Victoria', from Duke of Newcastle to Sir Henry Barkly, 8 November 1859.

Royal Society of Victoria

The first meeting of the Institute to be held in the new hall was the annual general meeting of 21 December 1859 when the President, Dr Ferdinand von Mueller, congratulated the members on the circumstances of their meeting together in their new building, and later delivered a special address to mark the occasion. His concluding words are worthy of repeating and becoming the motto of the Royal Society:

May the tempest of discord never re-echo from these walls! May every word resounding here be one expressive of friendly feelings, of philosophic thoughts, of elevated inspiration for all that is noble; and in aiming to fulfil the destiny for which we here are called, may our symbols be 'Concord and Progress'.

The pride with which the council looked upon their new building was soon evident when it was decided that it would be advantageous to have the hall open at evening. However, enthusiasm caused a little chaos, as, in the first month, it was agreed the building should remain open 4 p.m.—9 p.m. This was rapidly changed to 4 p.m.—6 p.m., and then almost immediately to 4 p.m.—10 p.m. Such apparent inconsistency was understandable in the pride of something new and of great importance in the scientific life of the State.

As an illustration of their faith in the new Institute, in 1859 the government set aside a considerable sum of money to be awarded as prizes for 'Prize Essays', open to the public of Victoria, with the Institute being requested to nominate 7 suitable subjects for such essays. After considerable discussion, the following 7 subjects were selected early in 1860, with the recommendation that a prize of £150 be given for the best entry in each section:

1. On artesian wells in reference to their practicability in certain localities in Victoria.
2. On the origin of gold in quartz veins and its association with other minerals.
3. On the most improved means of extracting gold from its matrices.
4. On the diseases of cultivated plants in Australia; their causes, treatment and prevention.
5. On agriculture in Victoria especially in reference to the geological condition of soils, to the rotation of crops, and to the application of manures.
6. On the prevailing diseases of domestic animals in Australia; their causes, treatment and prevention.
7. On the collection and preservation of water in Victoria for motive power, irrigation and general water supply.

While these exact titles were not approved by the government, 4 titles were selected to cover similar interests, and judges were appointed by the council of the Royal Society in October 1860. Twenty-six entries were received and the awards were made early in 1861, a prize of £125 stg. and a gold medal to the value of £25 stg. being made in each of the 4 sections. The recommendation of the judges that the winners' essays be printed was approved by the government, the 4 essays appearing in one volume from the Government Printer in 1861. The originals of these essays are still in the possession of the Society.

Thus, 1859 was one of great significance for the Institute in that, for the first time, it had a meeting place of its own, and also received the title 'The Royal Society of Victoria'. An important era in the history of the organization was completed.

The exhibition, at the meeting held on 4 June 1860, of specimens of 'malleable iron' from Cranbourne in the Western Port district of Victoria brought forth considerable discussion as to the nature and origin of such material. The original

samples came from a Mr Cameron, a resident of Cranbourne, who believed the deposits in question to be portion of a series of strata extending through the locality for a distance of 5 miles in sufficient quantity to constitute a commercial inducement to the formation of a railway to the area. However, further enquiries revealed that there were only 3 masses of such material present in the district, and that they were of meteoric origin. These masses became known later as the Cranbourne meteorites which attracted much attention, not only locally, but also in scientific circles overseas.

The final arrangements for the exploration party envisaged earlier and the despatch of that party on their journey northward were completed in 1860. As this project constituted one of the major activities the Society had considered up to that time and proved of such interest at a later date, it is well to consider in detail the arrangements for such exploration. It will be remembered that the exploration committee had raised a sum of more than £2,000 privately in order to secure the donation of £1,000 that had been promised anonymously, and that the legislature had voted the sum of £6,000 for the same purpose. The importance of taking advantage of the winter season to commence the expedition was nullified to some extent by the decision to obtain camels from India for the transport of the party. To this end the sum of £3,000 was forwarded to India. The camels, 25 in number, arrived in Hobson's Bay on 25 June 1860 in good order and condition on board the *Chinsurah*, and were immediately landed and properly housed.

The important duty of selecting a leader for the expedition was met by publicly calling for applicants. From a large number of applicants, the choice of Robert O'Hara Burke was made by the committee. Burke was the superintendent of police in the Castlemaine district and a former cavalry officer in the Austrian service. His appointment was unanimously endorsed by the government. The selection of the remaining numbers of the party was not such an easy task, as over 700 candidates applied for the various positions. These were invited to meet Mr Burke at the hall of the Society and, after careful inquiries and personal interviews, the following were selected:

George James Landells, Second in Command
 William John Wills, Surveyor and Astronomer
 Herman Beckler, Medical Officer and Botanist
 Ludwig Becker, Artist and Naturalist
 Charles Ferguson, Assistant and Foreman
 William Patten, Assistant
 Patrick Langan, Assistant
 Owen Cowen, Assistant
 Robert Fletcher, Assistant
 Henry Creber, Assistant
 William Brahe, Assistant
 John Drakeford, Assistant
 John King, Assistant
 Thomas McDonough, Assistant

The final organization of the expedition was quickly accomplished, and after a careful and thorough briefing, the party departed from Royal Park, Melbourne, on 20 August 1860 in the presence of a large number of people, including the Mayor of Melbourne, Dr Richard Eades, who was also vice-president of the Royal Society.

Two nights previously, on 18 August, a special meeting of the Society had been called, the main business being to take leave of the exploring party and to read and sign the Memorandum of Agreement between the exploration committee

of the Royal Society of Victoria and the several persons forming the exploration party. This set out fully the right of succession as leader of the party and the rates of pay of individual members of the party.

The story of the progress and ultimate fate of this exploration party need not be considered here, except to say that the Society received regular reports on its progress and, in spite of adverse public criticism, did all in its power, as was shown later, to provide assistance when disaster overcame it. The untimely death early in the expedition of Dr Ludwig Becker, the artist and naturalist, was greatly lamented by the Royal Society, as Becker not only had been a very early member of the Society but had contributed greatly, by papers and discussions, to its progress. The safe return of John King, the sole survivor, was made the occasion for a special commemorative meeting of the Society, when a gold watch, a gift from the Royal Geographical Society of England, was presented to him.

The government now agreed to provide a National Observatory amalgamating under one roof the Magnetic Observatory from Flagstaff Hill and the Astronomical Observatory at Williamstown; a new site to the NW. of the Botanic Gardens was chosen, which, because of its commanding situation and the absence of buildings, lent itself admirably for such a purpose. Thus came into active being, in 1863, through the initiative and drive of the Royal Society, a major scientific institution which, for nearly 100 years, was to serve in a very distinguished manner the scientific life of Australia.

The lack of sufficient funds within the Society at about this period, due largely to the sudden withdrawal of State aid, brought about a serious delay in the publication of the *Transactions*, so much so that the whole of the proceedings for 1861-1864 were brought out in one volume (Vol. VI). This event caused the Society much concern as, apart from any other consideration, the failure to publish was affecting the reputation of the Society as well as the exchange of periodicals from abroad. A number of papers which should have been published in full were lost, and abstracts only were published, and the whole situation was far from satisfactory. It was obvious that, at this period in its existence, the Society was losing something of the earlier enthusiasm. This is particularly shown by the fact that, in 1864, only 39 members paid their subscriptions, and the Society was facing a financial crisis of such a magnitude that it was forced to appeal to the government for help. To assist with subscriptions, the council appointed a paid collector of outstanding subscriptions working on a 10% commission basis and by this arrangement, which carried on for many years, a great deal of arrears was collected. The printing position was somewhat relieved by an offer of the proprietors of one of Melbourne's daily newspapers to publish the *Transactions* for the mere cost of printing and paper.

In 1864, a change was made with regard to the dues necessary for life membership, in order to overcome arrears of publishing. The existing rule was amended as follows:

Members may compound for all Annual Subscriptions of the current and future years by paying ten guineas. But for the purpose of establishing a Permanent Publishing Fund of the Society, all Life Subscriptions shall be devoted exclusively to a Publishing Fund, such subscriptions to be invested solely in State debentures, and the annual interest arising therefrom to be devoted to the issue of publications alone.

However, the decision of the government at this time to defray the cost of publishing the Society's arrears of *Transactions* relieved the immediate burden of the position, and enabled the Society to catch up with this important phase of its activities.

Honorary membership of the Society was also recognized at this time by the granting of illuminated diplomas, based on designs of overseas diplomas.

The outstanding event of 1865 was the exhibition of gems, both Victorian and foreign, and of works in the jeweller's art, held in the hall of the Society for a week in May. The organization of this exhibition was carried out by the President, Rev. J. J. Bleasdale, in an endeavour to bring before the public the gem and gold potential of Victoria, and to encourage the prospecting for such valuable minerals. In this, the president succeeded above all expectations, some 385 separate specimens being shown, with a distinct impetus being given to the interests in these materials.

It is obvious that in the early years of the period 1860/1870, the Royal Society held a very honoured place among the departmental scientific institutions and, in fact, became their spokesman on many occasions. It became the accepted principle for the President of the Royal Society in his anniversary or presidential address in March of each year to review in some considerable detail the progress made by such bodies as the National Museum, Geological Department, Botanical Department and Astronomical Observatory. This is perhaps not so surprising when it is realized that the directors and senior officers of these institutions were all at one time executive officers of the Royal Society and had no other means, in most cases, for the dissemination of the results of their research.

The widespread nature of the subjects of lectures and papers delivered during 1867, e.g., bears this out. In that year, there were 2 contributions relating to physical sciences, 3 to the natural history of Australia, 3 to the development of natural resources, 2 to pathological science, 4 to the geology, mineralogy and palaeontology of Australia and New Zealand, 1 to social sciences, and 2 to applied chemistry—a very good cross section of the scientific life of the State.

The visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to Victoria in 1867 was made the occasion for the presentation to him of a specially illuminated address and a copy of the *Transactions* of the Society. In addition, the hall was 'on the night of the general illumination of the city' illuminated for the first time.

1867 also saw the completion of negotiations with the government for obtaining the Crown grant of the land on which the new Royal Society hall had been built. This entailed the appointment of trustees, thus commencing a system which has been maintained through the life of the Society. The first trustees were Sir William Stawell, the Chief Justice of Victoria; Rev. Dr J. J. Bleasdale, St. Patrick's College; R. L. J. Ellery, Government Astronomer and President of the Royal Society; and C. W. Ligar, Surveyor-General of Victoria.

The state of the Royal Society buildings was causing serious concern at this period, and a detailed proposal estimated to cost £800 was submitted to the council by a special sub-committee to overcome these disabilities. The proposal called for the altering of the building to provide a meeting room 33 ft. square with the full height of the existing hall, fitted with rising slats like a lecture theatre, 2 rooms on the ground floor each 22 ft. by 16 ft. which would be used as a council room and secretary's room, and also a 'handsome' room on the first floor 33 ft. by 22 ft. for a library and reading room which would be open daily. It was estimated by the architect that these proposed alterations would cost approximately £450, together with £350 for a caretaker's cottage. This immediately brought an outcry from some members for the removal of the Society to another locality, the existing site being described as 'a desolate one'. The new site most favoured by them was the Public Library reserve, where it was hoped all the scientific societies and collections would collect, but it was later pointed out to them that it was much

better to remain on a site that was their own than to build on a place in which they would only be on sufferance.

This proposal being rejected by the members, the council was given authority to call for tenders. At the same time, it was recommended that a lodge should be erected in the grounds where an attendant could reside and safeguard the property of the Society.

Tenders for the above alterations to the hall were called early in 1869, and the tender of John Woods, a building contractor, for £415 was accepted—those for the lodge being deferred. During alterations to the building, meetings of the council took place in the Town Hall Chambers, while meetings of the Society as a whole were suspended. On the completion of alterations to the hall, it was decided to proceed with the construction of a brick lodge at an estimated cost of £330, the combined works being completed during August 1869, when regular meetings again were held in the building. The financing of these alterations presented some problems, and it was decided to approach the government with a request that the sum of £800 be placed on the estimates to enable this work to be carried out. However, a flat refusal was forthcoming from this source, and the whole project was then brought back to the Society for private financing.

Negotiations for this were finally successful on the following terms:

1. That the offer of the Melbourne Bank to lend the Royal Society money on promissory notes at six months each, renewable for two years, and bearing interest at nine per cent be accepted.
2. That subscription lists be opened and circulated, one for donations to the building fund, and one for debentures of £5 each, bearing interest at £8.8.0 per cent per annum. That the proceeds of these subscription lists be applied to paying the money borrowed from the bank.
3. That any member of the Society, holding debentures to the value of £15, shall be entitled at any time to surrender his debentures, and become a life member of the Society.

The success of these proposals was assured when debentures for over £200 were subscribed at the first meeting, the first one being taken out by James Bonwick, the historian and writer.

The first occupier of the newly completed lodge was Sergeant O'Flaherty of the police force, and it is illuminating to record his duties and his remuneration for same.

The lodge keeper has to be married with a small family, be a practical gardener, active and healthy, write legibly so as to be able to render clerical assistance, have no occupation which would keep him away from the meetings of the Society; shall perform the necessary cleaning of the hall, light fires when required, act as office keeper and messenger generally, keep the grounds in good order, and be of a thoroughly respectable character.

For these qualifications, he was to be paid the princely salary of 10 shillings per month, in addition to free occupancy of the lodge.

The printing of the *Transactions* received a further set-back in 1868 when the government subsidy to the Society was withdrawn. This position was not corrected until 1872 when sufficient funds became available through members' subscriptions to allow printing to be resumed, and liberal treatment by the government in 1873 assured continuity of such printing.

Additional financial worries followed in 1870 as, at that time, it was found that the treasurer had not been paying to the credit of the Society moneys which he had been receiving for subscriptions, and that cheques had been drawn and not

Royal Society of Victoria.



No.

LOAN

No.

FOR

ALTERING AND COMPLETING THE BUILDINGS OF THE SOCIETY.

£5.

DEBENTURE.

£5.

This Debenture entitles the Bearer at the Office of the said Society at Melbourne to the sum of Five Pounds Sterling on the second day of January, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy-nine, with Interest thereon at the rate of Eight Pounds Eight Shillings per centum per annum, which is hereby charged and secured upon all the Income and Chattels of the said Society, which Interest is payable half-yearly, on the second day of January and the second day of July in each year.

Provided nevertheless that the Council of the said Society shall at any time after the expiration of two years from the date hereof be entitled to satisfy this Debenture, by paying the said sum of Five Pounds, on giving three months' notice thereof, by advertisement in one or more Melbourne daily papers.

Provided also that if this Debenture be not surrendered in terms of such notice all Interest shall then cease to be payable thereon.

Dated this day of One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty and signed the same day in Melbourne.

_____ President.

_____ Treasurer.

_____ Secretary.



PRINTED AND SOLD BY H. G. SMITH, 15 COLLIER STREET EAST, MELBOURNE.

FIG. 2.—Debenture form issued in 1869 to finance alterations to Royal Society's buildings.

accounted for. Following exhaustive enquiries among members, a considerable deficiency in funds was found, and the treasurer, in the absence of any explanation whatever, expelled from the Society.

The most noteworthy event in the life of the Society during 1871 was the organization of an expedition to Cape York for observing the total eclipse of the sun on 12 December 1871. With liberal aid from the governments of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia, a well-equipped party of 8 observers and 13 passengers sailed from Melbourne, and was joined by a similar party of

6 observers and 3 passengers at Sydney. Arriving at their destination on 6 December, the scientific equipment was set up on a sandbank, and completed in time to allow for a day and a half of rehearsals. The weather, which had been perfect for observations for days, broke the night before the eclipse with thunderstorms and rain. With the exception of one moment when a break appeared in the heavy cloud to show the last thin crescent just before totality, nothing else was seen. This momentary break was all the Australian eclipse expedition saw of the total eclipse of 12 December 1871. Although disappointed by the lack of the hoped-for results, the expedition did not return empty-handed—botanical and natural history collections generally being made, together with a series of meteorological observations.

A major change of policy became evident in 1873 when an attempt was made to popularize the affairs of the Society. It had been evident for some years that the interest of the public in the Society had been waning and that, apart from the annual *conversazione*, very few members of the general public knew anything of the Society. It was realized that 'the real hard business of the Society, many of the questions to which the members should devote their energies, are of a kind productive of papers which, however valuable in a purely scientific sense, are the opposite of what is called popular. We gain something by popularizing our meetings.' It was therefore decided that, in the following year, a limit would be put on ordinary meetings, and a series of meetings of a more social character inaugurated. Which category the paper presented by James E. Neild, M.D., at the meeting immediately after this decision was made, entitled 'On the advantage of burning the dead', and strongly supporting the principle of cremation, came under was never disclosed.

It was also in 1873 that the Society recognized the necessity for making some provision for country members when compounding subscriptions for life membership. Consequently, on 12 August of that year, the following law was approved:

Members resident in Melbourne, or within 10 miles thereof, may compound for all annual subscriptions of the current and future years by paying £21, and members residing beyond this distance may compound in like manner by paying £10.10.0.

The falling off in membership of the Society, which was most apparent earlier, was still serious in 1874 when the total number was only 110. The Society suffered a serious loss also in that year with the death of Professor W. P. Wilson, who had been one of the earliest members of the Society and a vice-president for many years. His influence at council meetings had been of the highest, and his ability in discussion at general meetings considerably raised their standard.

Two further developments occurred in 1878 which were to have an important bearing on the future of the Society. Firstly, in order to attract young members it was decided that, as the entrance fee of 2 guineas together with 2 guineas subscription was prohibitive for this type of person, the constitution be amended to admit associate members at half price and without any entry fee, with privileges which would, with a few exceptions, be equal to those of members. It was hoped by this means to attract 'young men of the community whose tastes and education lead them towards our ranks, and whose enrolment is much to be desired'. Secondly, applications were received from one or two kindred societies of Melbourne for permanent accommodation within the building. Consideration was immediately given to continuing the floor of the library over the theatre, throwing the whole upper floor into one chamber, with the space beneath giving two more commodious

rooms. The honorary architect of the Society was called upon to prepare estimates of the cost of this work.

We fail to realize in these so-called modern days of science, the tremendous impact that some of the essential parts of our normal lives nowadays had on the scientific life of the community when they were first introduced. It almost reads as part of a fairy story to find in the presidential report for 1878 the following statements:

In my last address, I referred at some length to the then recent invention of the telephone. Since then this wonderful little instrument has been greatly improved, and is now in actual use in Melbourne, not only as a scientific toy, but as a means of communication. We had no sooner become familiar with the telephone, than we were astounded by accounts of a still more wonderful apparatus, the phonograph. While a wonderful future is predicted for the phonograph, at present, if we except its power of giving a peculiar graphic representation of multiple and complex sounds, it cannot be said to be out of the category of scientific toys. I believe there are actually specimens of these instruments in the building tonight.

I wonder if our reactions to modern inventions in the fields of nuclear physics, rocket space ships, radio and television, to mention but a few, have been any different.

The decision in 1858 to form a number of sections within the Society did not produce the results that were anticipated. Certainly a number of meetings were held in the first year or so, but after that the sections functioned either not at all or, at the best, only spasmodically. However, through the keenness of the President, Mr R. L. J. Ellery, who was also Government Astronomer, Section A (Physical, astronomical and mechanical science) was re-constituted in 1879, with a membership of 40. In the first 6 months, 5 meetings of the new section were held, all well attended, at which papers and demonstrations were given.

Alterations and renovations to the buildings that had been approved some time earlier were completed in 1880. Apart from the additional space provided within the building, the renovation 'in a plain but substantial style' of the outside of the building, which for a long time had presented a somewhat shabby and dilapidated appearance, produced a building of some dignity that was the subject of much admiration. In the same year, the sectional activity of the Society further advanced with the formation of another section, combining sections B, C and D in the original classification, which immediately commenced active work. However, its activity was short-lived as, after about 12 months of activity, meetings lapsed.

The year 1880 was also important in that the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria was formed on the lines of the old and well-known English one of the same name. As the objects of this new club were very similar to those of the Royal Society, although a greater emphasis was placed on field excursions for club members, it was only to be expected that a close relationship would exist between the two organizations over the years.

The death of Sir Redmond Barry on 23 November 1880 at the age of 67 years brought to an end the active association of this eminent legal authority with the Society. He was the first president of the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science, and later assisted in the formation of the Philosophical Institute which, after a short period, became the Royal Society of Victoria. He was at all times an active council member, and exhibited a sincere regard for the welfare of the Society.

A further step forward, and one which ensured a site for all time for the Royal Society, was the application made to the government in 1882 for the grant of the land on which the building stood. Previously the land had been only permanently re-

served for Royal Society purposes, and vested in a number of trustees. This application received the approval of the government, and enabled the Society to go ahead with permanent improvements to the property. The Crown grant of the site registered in Volume 1471 Folio 294133 was notified in the Government Gazette for 6 April 1883, and came into the possession of the Society shortly after, being then lodged for safe keeping with the Bank of Australasia.

In 1882, for the first time for many years, membership rose beyond 200, there being 163 members, 41 associate members, 6 corresponding members and 8 honorary members, a total of 218. This rapidly increasing membership was causing some embarrassment to the Society, so much so that, for the first time in its history, the Society was compelled to move away from its own hall for its annual conversation which was held in the Melbourne Athenæum on 14 September 1883. This was a really promising sign, as it attracted a number of members of the general public who, in the past, had been very loud in their criticism of the Society and its objects.

The resignation of Mr R. L. J. Ellery, Government Astronomer, as president in 1886 brought to a conclusion a term of nearly 20 years as president of the Society. To Mr Ellery must be given the credit of holding the Society together during a very difficult period when membership declined, financial assistance from the government was abolished, and the attitude of the public to the man of science was not at all tolerant. Through this troublous period, Ellery maintained his faith in the Society, gave encouragement and assistance to those younger members requiring guidance, and perhaps greatest of all showed to scientists in other parts of the world that, amidst all the excitement and turmoil of the foundation and growing up of a new colony, scientific investigation was not forgotten, but was proceeding at an increased tempo. Ellery was succeeded as president by Professor W. C. Kernot of the University of Melbourne, who, in his presidential address for 1885, detailed the essential requirements of a Royal Society, particularly with regard to fundamental matters. His address on that occasion is well worth reading as a yard-stick of scientific aims and achievements.

Although some years had elapsed since the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition, no strong move within the Society had been made for further exploration until 1886, when a committee was set up by the Royal Society, in association with the Geographical Society of Australia, to consider the question of 'Antarctic Exploration'. For a number of years, European countries had been very active in the field of Arctic research, particularly in the establishment of meteorological and astronomical observation stations, and attempts had been made with similar ideas for the Antarctic. The committee pointed out that, as it was nearly 50 years since the last expedition was despatched to Antarctica, it was time that another scientific expedition be organized and despatched.

The Society had had some contact with polar exploration as, in 1874, during the visit of the *Challenger* to Melbourne after it had crossed the Antarctic Circle and closely approached what is now known as Princess Elizabeth Land, Professor Wyville Thompson, the scientific leader of the expedition, was made an honorary life member of the Society, and a set of the *Proceedings* donated to the library of the expedition.

It is perhaps well to consider in some details the early work of this committee, as Antarctic exploration was to play a prominent part in the life of the Society in latter years. The committee consulted a number of interested bodies both in Australia and overseas and, in addition, enlisted the sympathy of appropriate govern-

ments. It was felt that, provided a suitable steam vessel was available, no great difficulties were likely to be encountered, while the harvest of scientific results that could be reaped by such an expedition would most probably be high, and substantial advantage of a commercial nature might well be secured.

The representatives of the Royal Society, which included, among others, the president, Professor Kernot, and the Government Astronomer, Mr Ellery, met with the members of the Geographical Society on 8 separate occasions during 1886 and 1887 and, after exhaustive enquiries throughout the world, produced a series of 23 recommendations which were forwarded to the Honourable the Premier of Victoria for his consideration. From these recommendations, the following warrant special consideration:

1. The Antarctic Committee begs respectfully to recommend to the Honourable the Premier the propriety of stimulating Antarctic research by the offer of bonuses.
2. That a sum of £10,000 be placed upon the estimates to provide for the amount of the bonuses, and for the expenses of the equipment and the staff.
3. That the Government invite tenders from shipowners willing to perform the duties involved.
4. That tenderers must provide two fortified steam ships, each of not less than 175 tons register, 60 horse power, and A1 at Lloyds, or of equivalent class.
5. That the master and chief mate of both ships shall have held similar positions in Arctic steamships.
6. That the tenderer shall provide, free of charge, cabin accommodation in each ship for two gentlemen, who will sail as the scientific staff, also a separate cabin as an instrument room and office.
7. The chartered ships will earn a special bonus upon their entering at the Customs House a cargo of 100 tons of oil, being the produce of fish caught south of 60° S.
8. The services desired are—a flying survey of any coastlines lying within the Antarctic Circle, the discovery of new waterways towards the South Pole, and the discovery of commercial products.
9. The Government should pay for only one observing camp established for each 120 miles of latitude or longitude etc.
10. Both ships must be in Port Phillip Bay and ready to sail on the 15 October 1887.
11. That in case of any difficulty arising in England between the Agent-General and the contractor, it shall be referred to the British Antarctic Committee for decision.

Broadly summing up the purposes of the expedition, the committee considered it was desirable that more precise knowledge respecting the physical conditions of the Antarctic regions should be obtained, especially with reference to terrestrial magnetism and volcanic and seismic agencies, and still more particularly to the meteorological conditions of the several zones to the south of the 50th parallel.

This 'Memorandum of Recommendations' was forwarded by the Premier of Victoria to all Australian governments, and to the Agent-General in London who circulated likely sources throughout Europe. However, while immediate offers of assistance were received from shipping and exploring interests overseas, no immediate action resulted.

The preliminary meeting held in Sydney on 10 November 1886 for the founding of an Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1888 was attended by Mr Hunt of the Royal Mint, Sydney, a country member, on behalf of the Society. The April 1888 meeting of the Royal Society announced the establishment of this Association, and pointed out the desirability of co-operation between the States in successfully launching in August 1888 the Australasian equivalent of the famous British Association for the Advancement of Science. The delegates from the Society to this first meeting were Professor Kernot (president), Professor Baldwin Spencer and Mr R. L. J. Ellery.

In June 1887, one of the smaller societies which had formed in Victoria some years earlier, the Microscopical Society of Victoria, offered to amalgamate with the Royal Society, and to form Section D, for the study of the microscope and its applications. This offer was accepted by the council and the opinion was expressed that it would be advantageous for other societies to follow suit. At the July meeting of that year, 41 members of the Microscopical Society were admitted as members of the Royal Society and 5 as honorary members.

In 1888 it was decided that the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of Victoria should be published in the same form, with the same shape and size of plates, as the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of London, and be kept separate from the *Proceedings*. In these, original work of members of the Society would be published. To Professor Baldwin Spencer was given the honour of filling the first volume with his monumental work on *Megascolides australis*, the giant earthworm of Gippsland.

Two other matters of considerable scientific importance also were formulated in this year—firstly, the necessity for a detailed biological survey of the waters of Port Phillip Bay, and secondly, the desirability of the preservation of Wilson's Promontory as a national park. In both of these projects there was active co-operation with the Field Naturalists Club, both in committee and field work.

The Port Phillip Biological Survey Committee is worthy of some attention, as it was one of the most important of the research projects with which the Society had an active interest. Formed towards the middle of 1887, it consisted of 7 members (Messrs W. M. Bale, A. W. Cresswell, A. H. S. Lucas, P. N. McGillivray, Baldwin Spencer, C. A. Topp, and J. Bracebridge Wilson), all authorities in some field of the proposed survey. The aims of the committee were many, the chief being:

- (a) To make a catalogue of the existing literature relating to the fauna and flora of Port Phillip.
- (b) To set up a number (32) of littoral and marine stations of which the life forms of each will be explored.
- (c) To prepare an extended catalogue of the plants and animals of each area, recording such details as life history, associations and commercial value.
- (d) To have the specimens collected identified by competent scientists, so that published records will be accurate.
- (e) To investigate biological problems as may arise from time to time.

It was intended *pro tem.* that the specimens obtained should be kept at the University under the care of Professor Baldwin Spencer. The council approved an annual grant of £50 to this committee to help defray expenses, and arranged for a display of specimens obtained from the first year's operations at the annual conversazione.

Dredging operations commenced at once, and continued over many years with prominent members of the Field Naturalists Club assisting with the work. Reports were regularly submitted to the council, and papers read to the Society setting out details of what had been accomplished. It is to the credit of this committee that so much information on the biology of Port Phillip was obtained in such a short period. When the committee was finally disbanded many years later, the specimens obtained were distributed to various museums and individuals throughout Australia, the valuable Bracebridge Wilson collection of sponges being offered to the National Museum in Melbourne.

The annual meeting of the Society held on 14 March 1890 took on a new form after the council had decided that at the annual meeting of each year, a popular

and brief outline should be given by recognized speakers on the progress made in various branches of science during the previous year. At this meeting, short addresses were given on astronomy, chemistry, biology, public hygiene, geology, literature and fine arts.

In 1889 the death occurred of another of the original founders of the Society, Sir William Stawell, who for some time filled the position of Chancellor of the University of Melbourne and was interested in all scientific matters. Another section (Section G, literature and art) was formed during this year. Although its formation was somewhat of a new departure in the history of the Society, it was provided for in the laws.

The nomination of a lady as a member in July 1889 marked a new era in the life of the Society. She was Miss Helen H. Neild, daughter of Dr Neild, honorary librarian of the Society. The president, in giving a ruling on this matter, stated:

After careful search through the laws, the council can find nothing to prevent a lady becoming a member of the Society. I believe the Society was formed on the supposition that ladies as well as gentlemen would become members of it. The ladies had not hitherto come forward to claim their right, but it was improbable that many others would follow the example set by Miss Helen H. Neild.

Miss Neild was duly elected an associate member. This apparently had a marked effect on the membership of the Society as, at the following meeting, it is recorded that the president submitted a long list of names of ladies nominated for membership.

By the end of the year, the membership of the Society had risen to 18 life members, 125 ordinary members, 38 country members, 6 corresponding members, 12 honorary members, and 93 associate members, a total of 292.

Professor Baldwin Spencer, Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne, was actively associated with the Society at this juncture. Only recently arrived in Melbourne from England, Spencer brought with him all the enthusiasm for scientific research for which he was noted overseas and which played an important part in his appointment as the first Professor of Biology at Melbourne. Through his direct representations to the government, the annual grant to the Society was raised to £500, which proved indispensable to the continuation of its publications. At the same time, his skilled organizing as the first Victorian Secretary of the Melbourne Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in January 1890 ensured its success. Spencer, in later years, was to exert a profound effect on the affairs of the Royal Society as honorary secretary, president and trustee.

An ethnological section of the Society (Section E) was formed, with the consent of council, in April 1890. The reason given for its formation was that, as traces of the aboriginal race were growing fainter and fainter, the section might be able to save from oblivion many interesting facts and relics. This section was entrusted to the capable hands of Mr A. W. Howitt, secretary of the Mines Department, and Rev. Lorimer Fison, of Essendon, who were shortly to be joined by Professor Baldwin Spencer.

As a further example of the varied interests of the Society at this time, it is worth recording that, in 1890, a committee of experts was appointed to enquire into the subject of cremation. The prime mover behind this action was Mr H. K. Rusden, a life member, who for many years had been interested in the subject, and who at the Melbourne Meeting of the Australasian Association had read a paper,

'Cremation, a sanitary necessity'. The committee so formed consisted of Professors Masson and Kernot, of the Melbourne University, and Mr H. K. Rusden.

Another project which the Society was considering was the necessity for a gravity survey of Australia. A strong committee recommended that such a survey was not only highly desirable, but readily possible, as the Royal Society of London had offered on loan the pendulum apparatus employed for a similar purpose in the great trigonometrical survey of India. Co-operation for this project was immediately forthcoming from a number of States, and approval was forthcoming, finance permitting, for this work to commence.

The subject of Antarctic exploration entered a new phase in this year when a definite offer was received from Baron Nordenskjöld and Baron Oscar Dickson of Sweden to send a Swedish ship to the Antarctic, provided that Australia contributed £5,000 to the cost. The expedition was not to be a whaling and scientific one, which all experts condemned seeing that the two objects would be in conflict, but would be a purely scientific expedition. This magnificent offer to defray half the cost of such an expedition was immediately accepted by the Antarctic committee, and public subscriptions were called to raise sufficient funds to allow the expedition to be despatched during the summer of 1891. The Royal Society headed the subscription list by voting £100 towards the funds.

Early in July, at a public meeting held in the Athenæum to appeal for funds, it was stated that the original estimate of £10,000 had grown to £15,000, but that it was hoped to raise £22,000 to place the success of the venture beyond doubt. An individual donation of £1,000 at that meeting gave the organizers great encouragement. It was also reported that the Swedish explorer, Baron Nordenskjöld, had commenced active preparations to lead the expedition in some 14 or 15 months' time. Considerable discussion ensued as to which Australian scientists would accompany the expedition, but no final decision was made pending further information.

The committee formed to report on the controversial subject of cremation finally produced its report towards the end of 1892. After carefully surveying the field of human burial the world over, the committee 'confidently recommends cremation as incomparably the best solution of every difficulty, particularly on hygiene, sentimental and economical grounds. It seems clear that both the public advantages of cremation, and the public dangers of burial, are infinitely more important and practical than any private predilections either way'. A model of a suitable crematorium was displayed and its action explained. The report was adopted by the Society and printed in the *Proceedings*.

The division of the members into sections, as was envisaged in the original constitution and as was carried out by certain sciences, came very much under criticism early in 1892, largely because of the so-called un-society attitude of Section G (literature and fine arts). Professor Baldwin Spencer was the leader in this reform move and, after stating that the Society was not large enough to be broken up in sections and that any such breaking up must weaken the Society as a whole, was successful in having the appropriate rules of the constitution rescinded. Thus ended a period in the developmental life of the Society which, in some ways, had served particular branches of science satisfactorily, but which, in others, had caused dissension and disunity among members.

The financial depression that occurred throughout Australia in the early '90s was felt in the Royal Society as elsewhere. The reduction of the government grant from £500 to £250 in 1892 brought about the discontinuance of the *Transactions*

of the Society, publication being limited to the *Proceedings*. This was greatly regretted by the council as by its members.

It is interesting to record that in 1892 the Society valued its assets for insurance purposes at £4,000, made up of building £2,650, furniture £350 and books £1,000.

1893 saw further marine work carried out by a member of the Society in co-operation with a government department. The necessary permission having been given to the secretary of the Customs department for a scientific representative to be present during the trawling operations of the *Swansea* off Lakes Entrance, Mr T. S. Hart was appointed representative of the Society, and financial assistance was given to the project. On his return, Mr Hart submitted details of his results in a paper to the Society.

As one of the means for economy within the Society, the taking of shorthand notes of council meetings, which had been the custom for many years and which had involved a considerable sum of money, was discontinued after the June 1893 meeting. In this year, also as an economy measure, it was decided to call tenders for the publication of the *Proceedings*, the tender of Messrs Ford & Sons, printers, of Carlton, being accepted. Thus commenced an association with this firm for the printing of the Society's publications which was to last with only short breaks for over 60 years.

The departure of the steam whaler *Antarctic* from Tonsberg in October 1894 under the command of Capt. Christensen was an evidence of the interest created in the region by the active agitation of the Antarctic exploration committee during the previous 10 years and, although the primary objective of the vessel was whaling, some meteorological observations were made and specimens collected. The accounts of the voyage, which reached 74°S., whetted the appetite of the committee for the fulfilment of their earlier objectives.

The further reduction of the government grant to £100 in 1895 brought to the fore a financial crisis in the Society which required great pruning of everything but essentials to enable the Society to pay its way with maintenance of the building and library. The foregoing of the publication of certain papers that had been presented to meetings became a necessity, and the publication funds became exhausted with the printing of Vol. IV of the *Transactions*.

1896 brought to a close the life of another of the pioneers of the original Society, an explorer of some considerable fame, and a botanist of worldwide reputation—Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller. Mueller, a foundation member of the Victorian Institute for the Advancement of Science and of the Philosophical Society of Victoria, had always been actively engaged in the work of the Society either as president or as a council member, and his contributions to the Society in the field of botany and exploration brought fame not only to himself (for which he cared but little) but also to the Society. His service of over 40 years as Government Botanist brought a clear picture of the potential of the vegetation of Australia and, at the same time, his knowledge of overseas plants suggested possibilities for commercial introductions.

With the object of bringing members of the Society together at an annual gathering, the council in 1896 decided to re-inaugurate the *conversazione* which had once been a feature of the annual life of the Society. This was held in the Society's hall in October in place of the normal monthly meeting; two short lectures were given, followed by a musical programme from students of the Conservatorium. This annual reunion of members was later to become an important part of the year's activities, bringing together, as it did, all interests of the Society.

The reduction of the government grant again hampered publication but, more particularly, attention to the library where, through inability to carry out book-binding, serious losses of parts of publications were resulting.

The prevailing financial difficulties of 1897 which contributed largely to a sharp reduction in the number of financial members brought about a financial crisis which was met in a threefold way. A special sub-committee reporting on 'ways and means' prepared recommendations, which were later approved by the Society, for the following:

- (a) The letting of the present hall for a period of years, together with the securing of rooms more central in the city which would probably retain existing members and help in obtaining new ones.
- (b) The holding of an annual dinner, at which all members would be invited. (In later years this became a feature of the annual activities of the Society.)
- (c) The abolishing of the entrance fee for new members to the Society. This was approved for a trial period of 3 years.

Actual experience soon showed that the first of these recommendations was impracticable, but the others produced some improvement in the membership of the Society. However, the reduction of the government grant in the following year to £50 only aggravated the position, and the Society continued struggling.

The death of Sir Frederick McCoy in 1899 removed from the Society another of the foundation members of the earlier societies and a former president. McCoy, the first Professor of Natural Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Director of the National Museum and Government Palæontologist, had contributed greatly to the affairs of the Society, and although he did not always see eye to eye with the council on matters of policy, yet was respected because of his wealth of knowledge and clear thinking.

With McCoy's death, Professor Spencer became Director of the National Museum and, because of the complete re-organization that became necessary following the decision to transfer the Museum from the University to the Public Library block, he was obliged to resign as honorary secretary of the Society—a position he had held with great distinction for ten years. However, he did not entirely sever his connection with the Society as, in a year or so following this time, he was elected president, and later a trustee.

The decision in 1901 that the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature of the Royal Society of London should be extended to Australia resulted in the Royal Society being requested to form the Regional Bureau for Victoria, with headquarters at the Society's hall. Professor J. W. Gregory agreed to become head of this bureau. However, in spite of the fact that the government expressed its opinion that it was not prepared to assist in the publication of this work, and had referred the matter to the Public Library, the Society decided to continue the work of the Regional Bureau at its own expense. Professor Gregory carried out these duties until 1904 when, because of his leaving Australia, it became necessary to appoint a new cataloguer. Professor W. A. Osborne and Mr T. S. Hall (the Society's secretary) were appointed to continue this valuable work, but owing to pressure of other duties were quickly forced to relinquish it. After the Science Faculty of the University had been offered this project, but were unable to carry it out, it was referred back to the Bureau in London which, following communications with the Agent-General there, suggested to the Premier of Victoria that the Public Library should undertake the work. This being approved, in 1911 the government offered an annual grant of £50 for cataloguing purposes, which arrangement continued until 1915 when the grant was abandoned. The work, however,

was carried on by the staff of the Public Library under great difficulties, particularly during the war years, under the direction of Mr E. R. Pitt, who was also a member of the Society. How well he succeeded in this task is now known to every Australian librarian. However, in 1921, the Royal Society of London, through lack of finance, was forced to abandon the project.

Following the death of Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller in 1896, the question of a permanent memorial to his memory was discussed. Co-operation was immediately offered to the Royal Society of Victoria by the Royal Society of Tasmania and the Royal Geographical Society of Australia. As a result, the Mueller Medal was founded, the first award being made in 1904 to A. W. Howitt, the noted explorer and anthropologist and a member of the Society. Howitt, then an old man and in failing health, received the award at a joint meeting held with the Field Naturalists Club.

The earlier interest of the Society in the reservation of Wilson's Promontory as a national park was reviewed in 1904 when it was reported that the Lands department was proposing to throw open this area in 1,000 acre blocks for grazing purposes. It was immediately decided that a joint deputation from the Field Naturalists Club and the Royal Society should wait on the Minister for Lands to protest at this proposal. This deputation brought a rapid response as, in the *Government Gazette* for 8 March 1905, the permanent reservation of 75,000 acres there as a site for a national park was gazetted. It was felt later that this area was not enough, and that portions of the narrow neck of the isthmus should also be reserved. In this the government finally agreed—a total reservation of 103,000 acres resulting in the formation of the magnificent national park we know today.

Early in 1907, a request was received from the Federal Meteorological Bureau in Melbourne that the triangular piece of land at the E. end of the Society's grounds be placed at the disposal of the Department of Home Affairs for meteorological purposes. After ascertaining from the Lands department that there was no obstacle in the way of the Society leasing portion of their area, provided it was for scientific purposes, an agreement was entered into with the Federal department that the area in question would be available to them for £50 per annum. It was a suggestion from the government at the same time that any such moneys received should be kept in a separate account, and devoted solely to the improvement of the Society's buildings and land. Thus was established a weather station which for over 50 years has kept daily recordings of the meteorology of Melbourne.

A proposal which had been under consideration for some time that there be no distinction between members and associates, that all be treated as 'members', and that the annual subscription be fixed at £1.1.0, was finally abandoned in 1907. It was hoped to attract more members in this way, but it was found that the state of the Society's finances was such that the proposal was impracticable.

From early in the life of the Royal Society, the president was *ex officio* a member of the Board of Management of the Alfred Hospital, though the exact relation between these institutions was never made clear. This arrangement continued until 1911 when the membership of the board was reconstituted.

With the rapid improvements in essential services taking place in Melbourne in the early 1900's, the Society was faced with the desirability of the use of electric lighting in the main hall. The change from gas to electric lighting took place early in 1910 when, for a total cost of £22.0.6, the necessary installations were effected. The incomplete faith in this system was evident when the council decided that it was desirable to retain the gas fittings throughout the buildings. The economical

nature of this 'new method of illumination' was shown by the monthly accounts of 2/3 paid to the City of Melbourne for the following 12 months. At the same time as this change took place, it was decided that a re-arrangement of the rooms on the ground floor was also desirable. The new proposal called for the NE. room to be devoted to the council room, with the room behind it a stack room for the library. This arrangement has persisted to the present day.

In 1913, the inadequacy of the present building to meet the needs of the Society and its tenants caused council to consider either enlarging the present building or rebuilding on the same site. An appeal by the council to the members for financial assistance brought an immediate response, £1,500 being promised, largely on the principle of debentures as used in the financing of the first building project. An approach to the government to meet this on a pound-for-pound basis was not enthusiastically received.

The proposal as approved by the council envisaged a new hall placed to the E. of the existing building, thus leaving the site to the W. available for letting at some future time. As considerably more money was required for the project than was in hand, it was decided to seek finance from the State Savings Bank. However, the title deed of the Society was such that this was not permitted without an amending Act of Parliament. Approval for this being granted by the government, the necessary Bill was prepared and eventually, late in 1915, this Bill passed through both Houses of Parliament without amendment. Immediately an agent was appointed to act for the Society with respect to the leasing of its land but, possibly because of war-time conditions, no offers were forthcoming.

In 1917 the lease of the land along Exhibition St., with a frontage of 193 ft. by a depth of 60 ft., was offered to the City of Melbourne Crèche for £200 per annum for 30 years, provided that a building approved by the council to the value of £2,000 was erected thereon. This offer was not taken up and the project lapsed.

An extraordinary event occurred in June 1915 when the council expelled from its membership an honorary member—a German professor—as a protest 'against the doctrines and methods of warfare adopted by Germany and Austria'. This rather discreditable action on the part of the Society clearly illustrated the feelings of the time, but surely science must recognize that an individual should not necessarily be held responsible for the actions of his government.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought many changes in the membership and activities of the Society. Two very important recommendations, one a decision affecting the members and one concerning scientists generally, were made early in 1916. These were:

- (a) That conscripts of scientific training should be placed where their special qualifications could be used, with proper rank and emolument. This recommendation brought to the attention of the appropriate departments the potential of scientific manpower that was available among such societies. (This policy was also in active operation during World War II.)
- (b) That subscriptions of those on active service be held over until after the war. This decision was further implemented in 1920 when the subscriptions of all servicemen were considered paid as up to and including 1920. (The same concession was later applied to those members who served during World War II.)

The periodical difficulties of finance with which the Society had been faced almost since its inception loomed up again in 1922 when it was discovered that printing was 12 months in arrears, with no available funds to bring this essential part of the Society's activities up to date. After considering many possible methods of overcoming this situation, it was decided to ask the government to undertake

the printing of the *Proceedings* and, at the same time, to request authors to condense their papers as much as possible. The government not being willing to undertake the task, it was decided to economize by using a smaller size of type.

Throughout the history of the Society, the one important feature of its activities, the printing of the *Proceedings*, has given the council more cause for concern than any other single item. This is particularly significant when it is realized that the Society has always depended on its *Proceedings* as an exchange medium of literature throughout the world to build up the extensive and comprehensive library for which it has always been known. It is no exaggeration to state that the library has always been the most important single factor in the Society's development, and that no more important collection of scientific literature is housed in the building of any society in Victoria at the present time.

The question of sections, which had been in abeyance for a considerable number of years, was raised when interest within the Society developed around the subjects of mathematics and physics. The interest became so great in 1923 that a new section was formed—the mathematical and physical section—to be concerned specially with mathematics, physics, astronomy and chemistry. The functions were to be chiefly concerned with the development of these sciences as a whole and acquainting its members with the results of latest research work both at home and abroad. The section under the control of 10 councillors, with Professor T. H. Laby as chairman, functioned immediately with special meetings being held for its members, attendances of up to 80 being obtained. After many years of successful operation, this section became absorbed into other scientific societies.

The decision in June 1923, that all papers submitted to the Society should be refereed prior to publication, was a noteworthy one in that it guaranteed the suitability of the material for the *Proceedings*. The only exception to this principle was to be in the case of no suitable referee being available in Australia, when the council would accept responsibility for publication.

A strong deputation to the government in 1923 for increased financial assistance brought immediate results. The deputation asked not only for the restoration of the annual grant but that action should be taken to repair the Society's premises and bind its library periodicals. Following an inspection of the property by the State Treasurer, Sir William McPherson, an assurance was given that the annual grant would be raised to £200, the volumes of the library would be bound by the Government Printer, and repairs to the building would be effected through the chief architect of the Public Works Department. While these negotiations were in progress, a further offer was received by the council through their agent for the leasing of the Exhibition St. frontage for the erection of a garage at an annual rental of £300. The Treasurer of the government, stating that he was opposed to Crown Lands being leased in such a manner, brought about a refusal by the council not only of this tempting offer, but a cancellation of the earlier decision to lease portion of the site. Sir William McPherson's proposals being approved by the government, 800 volumes were bound by the Government Printer free of charge, while plans and specifications of works to cost approximately £1,000 were prepared by the Chief Architect. While the latter was not immediately forthcoming, renovations to the caretaker's cottage and the fencing were carried out expeditiously.

During the period 1880 to 1925, a number of scientific societies had been coming into being in and around Melbourne, each with its own headquarters or sharing the offices of others. Several proposals were put forward that the scientific societies of Melbourne should combine in the obtaining of a common meeting place

centrally situated in the city. While the Royal Society in 1924 was not satisfied with its own building or site, it was not anxious to accede to the other proposal either, and perhaps with the good hearing that the last approach to the government had received, decided to seek alternative quarters. The proposal made to the Premier on 29 September 1924 was to exchange the existing site of the Society for a suitable site of 100 ft. by 100 ft. of land in St Kilda Rd. which the government had at its disposal, and for the granting by the government of £10,000 to erect a building there. The figure of £10,000 was stated to be the difference in value of the two sites, so that the proposed exchange would be on an even financial basis. The Premier, however, did not receive this proposal sympathetically, and stated that the Society would be better if it remained on its present site. The Society as a whole, on reviewing this matter, came to the same conclusion, but decided to ask the government to improve the existing buildings by the addition of a lecture hall and suitable offices. A change in government at this time placed such proposals in the background for the time being.

The state of the grounds around the building was also causing concern at that time, not only to the Society, but also to the city authorities who, by letter, insisted that the dead trees around the hall be removed and the fences renovated. This was the first step in a series that resulted, at a later date, in the removal of the fence altogether and the taking over of the maintenance of the lawns and garden by the Parks and Gardens department of the Melbourne City Council.

In 1925, a progressive step was made by the Society with regard to its publications by issuing a memorandum for authors in which was clearly set out those rules that were expected to be followed by contributors to the *Proceedings*. This greatly facilitated the work of the editors and effected an economy in printing.

A notable addition to the council in 1925 was Mr Russell Grimwade who later, as Sir Russell Grimwade, became one of the trustees of the Society. One of Mr Grimwade's first acts as a council member was to present a projector for use in the hall, an instrument which is frequently used at the present day. The value of Mr Grimwade's business ability and experience was evident in the negotiations that immediately followed for the leasing of a certain portion of the site for the construction of buildings that would revert to the Society after a fixed period of years. Like other prospective proposals, however, this also lapsed. Mr Grimwade again showed his generosity by paying the expenses of all these negotiations.

In 1908, an attempt had been made by interested persons to commemorate the late A. W. Howitt, zoologist, geologist, botanist and ethnologist, in some tangible and permanent form. In all, over £100 was raised at that time but, as no concrete ideas were forthcoming, the money was invested. Later, in the year 1923, Sir Baldwin Spenceer drew attention to this money lying idle and suggested that active steps be taken in the matter. However, no steps were taken until 1927 when it was decided that the fund should be used for the purchase of rare books on anthropology, petrology or botany for the library, such works to be inscribed 'Purchased from A. W. Howitt Memorial Fund'. It was also decided that the following order of priority be used for purchases: 1st year, anthropology; 2nd year, botany; 3rd year, geology.

The proposal by the National Museum in 1927 that a lecture theatre should be built there for the purpose of public scientific lectures attracted the interest of the council who felt that a combined approach to the government by the two organizations might prove beneficial to having a hall erected on the Society's site. This

proposal was not sympathetically received by the trustees of the museum and the matter lapsed.

The earlier work of the Society in relation to the preparation of the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature was brought to the fore again in 1927 when the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research requested the assistance of the Society in the compilation of a catalogue of the scientific and technical periodicals in various libraries. This work has now become essential in all libraries holding scientific and technical journals.

The proposal of the Commonwealth Government that a Commonwealth Natural History Museum be established at Canberra was the subject of a report by a special committee of three, two of whom were members of the Society. At the request of the Commonwealth Government, their report was discussed by council late in 1929 and general approval recorded. However, like so many other worthy projects that have been considered from time to time, no action resulted.

The future of the Royal Society of Victoria and of the sister societies in other States came under review late in 1929. The Victorian Society discussed methods whereby (1) the international status of the Society and of its publications might be increased, (2) Australian papers on a given subject might be made more accessible, and (3) there should be more inducement to publish Australian papers in Australia rather than send them abroad. As a result of these discussions, representations were made to the other societies to consider the following proposals:

- (1) The Royal Societies in Australia should combine to form a Federation of State Societies or a Royal Society of Australia.
- (2) The Society in each State should hold its own meetings as in the past for the reading and discussion of papers.
- (3) In order to conserve State interests, the publication of papers should be divided into six sections, each to be issued under the name of a particular State.
- (4) The Federal Council of the proposed new body should co-operate with the National Research Council on matters of common policy.

In reply, the Royal Societies of South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales felt that the subject was worthy of further discussion, and suggested that this might take place in Brisbane at the time of the next A.N.Z.A.A.S. meeting. The Royal Society of Western Australia, in dissenting from the proposal, pointed out that if it were to lose its State identity, grave difficulties could arise.

At the conference in Brisbane, it was agreed that there were two insuperable difficulties in the way of carrying out the suggested amalgamation—firstly, the question of library exchanges, and secondly, the probable loss of grants at present given by State governments. With these obvious difficulties in mind, no further action resulted.

Very shortly after this decision, however, a Royal Society of Australia was formed in Canberra, but not as the result of the above deliberations. This immediately raised a storm of protests from the Royal Societies of several States who felt that such action was most unethical and likely to lead to great confusion, not only with overseas authorities but with local government bodies. The formation of the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra at a later date was welcomed by the Royal Societies as providing an institution more nearly approaching their objectives.

A statement that the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons was interested in acquiring suitable lecture hall and office accommodation in Melbourne brought fresh hopes to the council of the Royal Society that their site would be suitable for

the purpose. Accordingly, negotiations were commenced between the two institutions, whereby the College of Surgeons would rebuild on the existing site a large block of buildings in which the whole of the assets of the Royal Society would be housed in return for a certain annual rental and a long-term lease of the site (999 years). Negotiations were proceeding satisfactorily until, in 1932, the State Government offered the Royal College of Surgeons, at a nominal rental, the old site previously occupied by the Melbourne High School. This offer being accepted, negotiations between the two institutions ceased.

With the *Proceedings* of the Society approaching its 50th volume, the desirability of compiling a general index to the first 50 volumes became obvious. It was agreed that this work should be carried out on similar lines to that of the Geological Magazine. Failing the obtaining of financial assistance from outside the Society, it was proposed that the work be carried out by volunteers who would each take a number of volumes. This again proving impracticable, the honorary librarian submitted an author index for the period covering 80 years of publications, which was gratefully accepted and published.

The long period of printing the *Proceedings* by Ford and Sons received a temporary set-back in 1931 when, because of further financial difficulties, the Society was compelled to seek the further assistance of the government. There being little possibility of receiving additional money, the proposal that the Government Printer print the *Proceedings* at a concession was accepted by the Society. The government finally agreed to accept the responsibility for £100 of work with the printer, the Society to pay the balance. This arrangement continued for a number of years.

The publication in 1935 of the Pitt-Mund report on the libraries of Australia brought the inadequacy of the housing of the library of the Royal Society into prominence. The suggestion that the library be transferred to the Public Library for housing and administration was vigorously combated by the council as not being in the best interests of the Society. However, the report served a very useful purpose as it drew attention to the state of the valuable library and forced the council to take steps to improve its housing by the provision of additional steel shelving.

In appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the Society by the late Dr T. S. Hall at the turn of the century, the honorary librarian, Mr F. A. Cudmore, in 1936, donated a sum of money to be known as the 'T. S. Hall Memorial Fund'. The sole object of this fund was to be the improvement of the library, except that in the case of urgent need it could be used for the preservation of the library. Its primary purpose was to complete the holdings of periodicals, and secondly to ensure the forwarding of entries to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Catalogue of Scientific Periodicals. This fund opened up the way for the completion, in the following years, of a number of series of periodicals in the library.

When the Society's holdings were being checked with reference to the above memorial fund, it was discovered that there were over 8,000 volumes awaiting binding. In contrast to this, only 5,400 volumes had been bound. In order to overtake some of this enormous accumulation of unbound material, a special appeal was made to members for funds for bookbinding. This brought a ready response, £60 being received immediately, allowing a commencement to be made. This was augmented at once by a credit of £100 with the Government Printer by the State Director of Finance, who repeated the grant for a number of years. The book-binding fund as such became exhausted late in 1938.

The increasing costs of publication of the *Proceedings* caused the council, in 1938, to take firm measures to prevent persons joining the Society solely to have particular papers published. The following resolution was adopted:

Before papers are accepted for publication wholly or partly at the charge of the Society, the length of period of membership of their authors should be examined, and that where the author has not been a financial member or associate member for a period of 5 years, he or she should be asked to give a written undertaking to retain his or her state of financial membership until it shall have extended over a period of at least 5 years.

At the same time, it was affirmed as a general principle that universities and government departments should contribute in part, or in full, to the cost of publication of papers submitted by their officers. This principle, receiving the support of the institutions concerned, assisted the Society greatly in following years in its financial commitments.

A review of the conditions of tenancy of the triangular section of the site by the Meteorological Bureau, first executed in 1907, resulted in the annual rental being raised in 1938 from £50 to £100.

The suggestion, emanating from the Field Naturalists Club, that an annual award should be made in Australia to the person who does the most for the elucidation of the Australian flora and fauna, was strongly supported by the Royal Society. This resulted in 1939 in the gift of the Natural History Medallion by Mr J. K. Moir, of Melbourne, to be awarded annually on the terms mentioned above. The president of the Royal Society became *ex officio* a member of the award committee. In the years that followed, a number of distinguished members of the Royal Society were to receive this coveted award.

In 1940, the Society approved the principle of controlling the export of specimens of natural history, and presented to the Commonwealth Government a recommendation which had been agreed upon unanimously by the Royal Societies of all States and by the Linnean Society of New South Wales. Specific reference was made to the need to preserve Australia type specimens within Australia. As a result, appropriate regulations were made under Commonwealth law to prevent such trafficking without the permission of the museum of the State from which the material was being exported.

The advent of World War II led to difficulties in the forwarding of the *Proceedings* to overseas recipients. It became necessary to inform overseas societies that, in future, copies would only be forwarded on request, and then at the recipient's risk, with little or no chance of replacement.

The war also caused other problems to the Society, such as war insurance of the building and contents, A.R.P. measures, and the obtaining of permits for the supply of paper for printing the *Proceedings*. The taking over of the Society's hall by the Royal Australian Air Force for lectures in meteorology considerably inconvenienced the Society, but this was partly offset by the receipt of a rental of £100 per annum for its use, dating from 1 July 1942. A month or so later, a further sum of £52 per annum for the use of a downstairs room was received from the same source.

A proposal in 1944 by Royal Societies of several States in Australia that reciprocal benefits should be available between States to their members was agreed to in principle as being in the best interests of the scientific life of the community.

In 1945 it became evident that, with the rapidly increasing library and with the renewed interest in the Society, the buildings were not adequate for the requirements of the Society. A number of suggestions were forthcoming, one of which was

that the Society should claim from the Commonwealth Government exemption from income tax of gifts to the Society. The Federal Treasurer declined to approve, and the Society was forced back to consider further the leasing of the site.

The book-binding fund, which had been closed down in 1938, was re-opened in 1946 when, in addition to a sum of money set aside by the Society, money was received from commercial organizations for this purpose. This enabled some reduction in the large number of volumes awaiting binding. An attempt in the same year to have the credit of £100 per annum with the Government Printer transferred to an outright grant to the Society was refused. This was disappointing to the council who had hoped to use the money for printing the *Proceedings* in an attempt to overcome the time lag in publishing. However, the transfer to a cash grant was not long in coming, as it was effected during 1948.

The resignation of Dr F. L. Stillwell as honorary secretary early in 1947 was received by the Society with great regret. Dr Stillwell had occupied this very important post for over 18 years, a longer period than any previous secretary. During his secretaryship he had had to contend with the effect of the economic depression on membership and publication of the *Proceedings* and later, during the war period, the irregular despatching of publications throughout the world. The fact that this work was well done and the Society made progress during these difficult times speaks well for Dr Stillwell's ability and devotion to the Society. In recognition of these services, Dr Stillwell was elected an honorary life member. The Society, however, did not lose the benefit of Dr Stillwell's experience as he retained his seat on the council.

The raising of the government grant to £200 in the 1949/50 budget was welcomed as it enabled arrears of binding and printing to be commenced. The remission of stamp duty the following year brought some further relief.

Early in 1951, preliminary discussions commenced between the Society and the Australasian Branch of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynæcologists concerning possible alterations to the building and the grounds which would be of mutual benefit. After considerable discussion, a plan was mutually agreed to which entailed additions to the S. side of the building to make it square in plan but, at the same time, preserving a unity of design and materials. On the ground floor, the old supper room was to be completely remodelled and available to both institutions for use, while the additions on the S. side were for the sole use of the Royal College. On the upper floor, the lecture hall was to be remodelled and refurnished, while the library was to be refurnished and available for the Royal College as a council room. The additions to the SE. corner on the first floor were for the expansion of the library of the Royal Society. The whole of the cost of the alterations and the refurnishings, amounting to over £20,000, was to be met by the Royal College in return for a long-term lease of the site. The details finally receiving the approval of both societies and the government, work commenced on the project early in 1953. While the alterations were in progress, the Royal Society used the geology department of the University of Melbourne for its monthly meetings. In order to cover the new building against damage in any way, an insurance of £30,000 was effected, this contrasting sharply with the original valuation of the property at £4,000 in 1892.

Because of the declining finances of the Society and the necessity for raising more funds for incidentals following the alterations, the council in 1953 was forced to raise annual subscriptions from £2.2.0 to £3.3.0 for members, and £1.1.0 to £2.2.0 for associates, with corresponding increases for life membership. This was

actually the first increase in membership fees since the foundation of the Philosophical Institute in 1855.

The death of Professor E. W. Skeats in January 1953 brought to a close many years of service to the Society, firstly as a member, secondly as a councillor and president, and later as a trustee. Professor Skeats made a considerable bequest to the Royal Society to be used for any purposes which the council thought fit. Such bequests are commonly found among English scientific societies, but have been markedly absent in the Australian counterpart. They are extremely important and valuable to such a society, as they enable specific problems to be undertaken which would be impossible under normal circumstances.

The same year saw the resignation through ill-health of Mr F. A. Cudmore, honorary librarian from 1926. A meticulous worker and one who thoroughly appreciated the importance of this library in the scientific life of the State, Mr Cudmore was also responsible for the compilation and publication in 1934 of the author index of the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society and the earlier societies. Mr Cudmore bequeathed a considerable sum of money to the Society to be used for part payment of the salary of a trained librarian.

With the centenary of the Royal Society approaching, it was agreed to publish a special centenary volume, which would be partly historical and the remainder papers. An approach to the government for special funds for this purpose was not successful, but their annual grant was raised to £500 at this time.

The work of the new building progressed so rapidly that arrangements were made for the official opening of the new block on 25 August 1954 by His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks. Prior to this opening, an agreement concerning the grounds was made which ended all the previous worries concerning this part of the property where outbreaks of fire had occurred during the summer months. The agreement was made with the Melbourne City Council whereby, in consideration of the Royal College putting the grounds in order and installing an adequate watering system, the Parks and Gardens department of the City Council would take them over and maintain them free of charge.

The visit to Melbourne of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh at the time of the Olympic Games was made the occasion, on 3 December 1956, for a symposium at the Royal Society on the subject 'Australia's part in the geophysical year in the Antarctic'. His visit to the Society in 1956 recalled the previous visit of an earlier Duke of Edinburgh to the Society in 1867. At this symposium, His Royal Highness officially opened the proceedings with an address on the importance of the Antarctic continent. Other addresses were delivered by Sir Marcus Oliphant, president of the Australian Academy of Science; Sir Douglas Mawson, 'Australian Links with Antarctica'; Mr P. G. Law, 'Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition'; and Dr D. F. Martyn, 'Australia and the International Geophysical Year'; and the whole of the proceedings published in the form of a special symposium volume. On the same occasion, His Royal Highness conducted an investiture in the Society's hall at which 23 polar medals were conferred.

It was a very happy coincidence that the date of the centenary of the Royal Society of Victoria (November 1959) coincided exactly with the centenary of the publication of Charles Darwin's immortal work *The Origin of Species*. It was therefore very fitting that any celebrations that were to be planned should combine both centenaries.

In addition to a centenary soir e that was held at the Royal Society's hall on 12 November 1959, at which historical documents and specimens were exhibited

and a short historical paper read, a centenary symposium was held from 7-11 December 1959, the overall subject being 'The Evolution of Living Organisms'. For this symposium, the guest lecturer was Professor Ernst Mayr, Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard University, U.S.A. On 7 December, at the University of Melbourne, Professor Mayr delivered the first 'O. W. Tiegs Oration', established in memory of a former councillor and chairman of the library committee, on the subject 'Accident or Design? The Great Paradox of Evolution'. In the discussions which were held during the following week, contributions were made by eminent evolutionists from all countries of the world, the papers being later issued in the form of a special publication by the Melbourne University Press.

This symposium was a most fitting conclusion to the first hundred years of service to science of a society founded by men of vision in a young colony seething with the excitement of a major discovery of gold.

May the second hundred years of the Royal Society of Victoria be just as rich, not only in scientific achievement but also in service generally, to a rapidly growing nation with the potential for major contributions of world importance.

Let Baron von Mueller's aim, so aptly stated in 1859, at the first meeting of the first hundred years of the Royal Society—'Concord and Progress'—be the motto for the Society from 1959 to 2059.

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Explanation of Plates

FRONTISPIECE

Sketch of River Darling by Ludwig Becker, January 1861, on Burke and Wills Expedition. (Courtesy: Trustees of Public Library of Victoria)

PLATE I

Conversazione of the Royal Society, 8 August 1878, with Professor Ellery delivering the presidential address. (From *Illustrated Australian News*)

PLATE II

Royal Society Hall, about 1900. Note dead trees which were the subject of controversy with Melbourne City Council.

PLATE III

Royal Society Hall, 1959. (Courtesy: Department of External Affairs Antarctic Division)